

Message Text

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53

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAJ-01 OMB-01 AID-05 /083 W

----- 120951

R 130834Z JUL 76

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1218

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 8231

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, AF, TZ, ZA

SUBJECT: PRC VICE PREMIER SUN CHIEN GOES TO AFRICA

SUMMARY. PRC VICE PREMIER SUN CHIEN, THE HIGHEST RANKING CHINESE OFFICIAL TO VISIT AFRICA IN OVER A DECADE, DEPARTED PEKING JULY 12 TO ATTEND CEREMONIES MARKING COMPLETION OF THE TANZAM RAILWAY. THE PROJECT, CHINA'S LARGEST AID EFFORT, HAS SERVED CHINA'S INTERESTS IN MAINTAINING AN INFLUENCE AND PRESENCE IN EAST AFRICA. COMPLETION CEREMONIES COME AT A TIME WHEN SINO/SOVIET CONTENTION FOR INFLUENCE IN AFRICA HAS INTENSIFIED. END SUMMARY.

1. THE HIGHEST RANKING PRC OFFICIAL TO VISIT AFRICA SINCE THE 1964 VISIT OF THE LATE PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI, VICE PREMIER SUN CHIEN DEPARTED PEKING JULY 1 FOR TANZANIA AND ZAMBIA TO PARTICIPATE IN CEREMONIES MARKING CHINA'S COMPLETION OF THE TANZAM RAILWAY AND ITS FORMAL TRANSFER TO AFRICAN CONTROL. ACCORDING TO REPORT CARRIED IN THE PRC-OWNED HONG KONG TA KUNG PAO AND SOURCED TO A JULY 12 PEKING BROADCAST, SUN, WHO IS MAKING HIS FIRST TRIP ABROAD, WAS SEEN OFF AT THE AIRPORT BY SENIOR CHINESE OFFICIALS HEADED BY SENIOR VICE-PREMIER

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CHANG CHUN-CHIAO, VICE PREMIER KU MU, AND FONMIN CHIAO

KUAN-HUA. (THE LAST PRC VICE PREMIER TO TRAVEL ABROAD WAS CHANG CHUN-CHIAO, WHO VISITED KOREA IN SEPTEMBER 1975.)

2. LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT SUN, WHO REPORTEDLY WAS A WORKER IN TIENTSIN UNTIL HIS 1975 APPOINTMENT AS VICE PREMIER AT THE TIME OF THE NPC. HIS SELECTION AS THE RANKING PRC REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CEREMONIES SUGGESTS THAT MORE PRESSING DOMESTIC MATTERS MILITATE AGAINST THE SENDING OF A MORE SEASONED AND SENIOR CHINESE OFFICIAL. AT THE SAME TIME, PEKING PROBABLY WANTS TO OFFSET AFRICAN DISAPPOINTMENT WITH ITS EARLIER FAILURE TO DISPATCH A VICE PREMIER TO OCTOBER 1975 CEREMONIES MARKING INAUGURATION OF THE TANZAM, WHEN ZAMBIANS EXPECTED THE NOW-DEPOSED TENG HSIAO-PING TO ATTEND. ALTHOUGH PRESUMABLY A NOVICE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SUN IS ACCOMPANIED BY AN IMPRESSIVE PRC DELEGATION WHICH INCLUDES MINISTER OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES FANG YI, VICE PREMIER HO YING, VICE MIN OF RAILWAYS SU CHIEH AND THE PRC AMBASSADORS TO TANZANIA (LIU CHUN) AND ZAMBIA (LI CHIANG-FEN), ALL OF WHOM HAVE HAD CONSIDERABLE CONTACT AND DEALINGS WITH AFRICAN OFFICIALS OVER THE YEARS.

3. THE 1,860 KILOMETER TANZAM RAILWAY RUNNING BETWEEN DAR ES SALAAM AND KAPIRI MPOSHI, ZAMBIA, HAS BEEN THE PRC'S LARGEST SINGLE AID PROJECT. ALTHOUGH THE AID AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED IN PEKING IN SEPTEMBER 1967, ACTUAL CONSTRUCTION DID NOT GET UNDERWAY UNTIL OCTOBER 1970. THE \$400 MILLION PROJECT HAS ACCOUNTED FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE-THIRD OF TOTAL PRC AID DELIVERIES BETWEEN 1954 AND 1974. IN ADDITION TO THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS, PEKING'S DISPATCH OF SEVERAL THOUSAND CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AND TECHNICIANS TO ZAMBIA AND TANZANIA AND THE PERIODIC NEGOTIATIONS DURING WORK ON THE PROJECT PROVIDED HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS BETWEEN SENIOR CHINESE AND AFRICAN OFFICIALS SERVING TO STRENGTHEN THE PRC INFLUENCE AND STAKE IN EAST AFRICA.

4. THE CEREMONIES MARKING THE COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT WILL CALL ATTENTION TO CHINESE INTEREST IN AFRICA AND PERMIT FAVORABLE COMPARISON WITH THE EFFORTS OF THE TWO SUPERPOWERS AT A TIME WHEN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENTS NOT ONLY

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COMMAND GREATER ATTENTION IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, BUT SINO-SOVIET RIVALRY FOR INFLUENCE IN THE REGION HAS INTENSIFIED. MOREOVER, THE ATTENDANT FAVORABLE PUBLICITY FOR CHINA SHOULD SERVE TO OFFSET SOMEWHAT THE UNWANTED PUBLICITY GIVEN TO THE CHINESE ROLE IN THE ANGOLAN CIVIL WAR, I.E. PEKING'S HAVING BACKED THE LOSER WHILE MOSCOW BACKED THE WINNING SIDE. NORMALLY UNDERTAKING MORE MODEST SMALLER SCALE PROJECTS, CHINA'S ABILITY SUCCESSFULLY TO

COMPLETE SUCH A LARGE-SCALE PROJECT WILL ALSO NOT GO
UNNOTICED BY OTHER THIRD WORLD PEOPLE.
CROSS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MINISTERIAL VISITS, REPRESENTATION AT CEREMONIES, RAILROADS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976HONGK08231
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760269-0605
From: HONG KONG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760765/aaaacfak.tel
Line Count: 118
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 MAY 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <07 SEP 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRC VICE PREMIER SUN CHIEN GOES TO AFRICA SUMMARY. PRC VICE PREMIER SUN CHIEN, THE HIGHEST RANKING CHINESE
TAGS: PFOR, ELTN, PDIP, OVIP, CH, AF, TZ, ZA, (SUN CHIEN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006